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To the Union voters
of the counties of
Accomac and Northampton.
Joseph Segar.

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Book .S 56

TO THE UNION VOTERS

OF THE COUNTIES OF

ACCOMAC AND NORTHAMPTON.

Constrained by a matter of domestic concern admitting of no delay to withdraw, for the remainder of the Congressional canvass, from active participation in it on your shore, I beg, through the medium of the press, to say a few words to you before election day, and the more especially that many of you have not heard personally the elaborate expositions I have made of my representative acts, and my political position.

It is persistently urged by my opponent, Dr. Gillett F. Watson, and his friends, that he is a better Union man than I am, and, therefore, the more entitled to your votes. I dispute the pretension as altogether arrogant, and supremely bogus.

I have, I trust, quite too much self respect to enter upon any special showing of my Union sentiments. If my whole history from the very dawn of this unhappy civil strife be not proof enough of my devotion to the Union, I have none other to offer. The ignorance that ignores me in this regard, can never be enlightened by any beam that I can shed upon it, and will be incorrigible, though a witness should come forth fresh from the dead.

But when my opponent dares assert the claim of outranking me among Union men, he must himself "come to the scratch."

In my addresses at Horn Town, Accomac Court-House, and elsewhere, I called on him to say whether I was too much of a Union man for him, or not Union enough, so that I might have the data to make a comparison. He declined to answer; whereupon I charged that he who would, at a life-and-death crisis in the country's fate, divide the Union party, whose office it is to save that country, might have Union sentiment on his tongue, but could have none in his heart.

Unable to bring my opponent out on this point, I proposed another test. I had voted for the Conscription act, and Habeas Corpus or Indemnity act, regarding these as vital measures in the policy of the government for the vigorous prosecution of the war. These votes called forth violent assault. The brother of my competitor, Dr. Arthur Watson, was among the first and the fiercest of my impeachers.

So, to test the relative Unionism of him and myself, I put him the question distinctly, whether he would, had he occupied my seat in Congress, have voted for the Conscription and Indemnity acts? He again declined to answer, saying the votes for those measures were my votes, and I must explain them as best I could, and that when he should give such votes, it would be time enough for him to give his views and answer questions.

Now, I put it to the good and true Union men of the Eastern Shore, whether a candidate who refuses to commit himself on the most vital

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measures of Union policy, is as good a Union man as one who manfully avows himself in favor of those measures, and who actually sustained them by his votes? I have frankly declared to you that I *did* give the votes, that I regarded the measures voted for as indispensable to a vigorous prosecution of the war, and its speedy termination, and that if necessary I would give the votes again, but my opponent was as dumb as an oyster. Who is the better Union man of the two? Is he who is seeking your support worthy of it, who wants the manliness to avow his sentiments on the great questions of administrative policy connected with the rebellion? Does he fear the odium of what he regards as unpopular measures? Or may not secession influence be in his mind's eye?

Not able to commit him on the chief war measures, I sought another test, and propounded to my opponent this interrogatory: "Were you not a Quartermaster or Assistant Quartermaster in the State service of Virginia, after the State had seceded?" He was compelled to "own up;" for a respectable citizen, who was present, declared publicly in the Court-house, that he had sold Dr. Watson, as State Quartermaster, 600 pounds of bacon, at a shilling a pound, and another most respectable citizen declared that his wagon and team transported the bacon from the interior of the county to the State depository in Drummondtown.

I then propounded this further question: "Whether he was not one of a number of officers, who, after the State had seceded, had met at Pungateaque, and by proper proceedings, called on Governor Letcher and Gen. Lee to know what should be done with suspected Union men on the Shore;" that is, I presume, whether they should be thurst into a dungeon or be hung?

The gentleman was compelled to admit his participation in the proceedings of this board of officers, but claimed that the meeting took place *before* the State had adopted the secession ordinance. But in this my opponent is mistaken; for Mr. Parkes, who sold the bacon to this seceded State Quartermaster, declares that his books show that the date of the purchase was the 28th of May, 1861, five days after the passage of the secession ordinance, while General West, the Brigadier in command of the State militia then organized against the United States, voluntarily informed me that the officers' meeting at Pungateaque took place in June.

My opponent, it seems, either had not made up his mind what position to take, or, like the bat in the great battle between the birds and the beasts, was looking out for the strong side.

Union men of the Eastern Shore! no such suspicions attach to me. While Dr. Watson was acting as Quartermaster against the Government of the Union, and while holding that post, asking Governor Letcher and General Lee what should be done with the poor Union men in Accomac and Northampton, I was rather differently engaged: I was already suffering bitter persecution, because I had too early resolved to stand by the the Stars and Stripes.

On the 19th of April, 1861, I was compelled to flee from Richmond, clandestinely, to avoid having by a mob, only because a few days before I had made in the Legislature a strong anti-secession speech.

On the 27th of May, 1861, the day before Quartermaster Watson was buying Mr. Parkes's bacon, an attempt was made to shoot me in the back at fifteen paces' distance, with a double-barreled gun, and my life was saved only by the knocking aside of the gun by a friend who was present,

the leveller of the gun, remarking that "he meant to send the d——d traitor to h——l." On the 4th of June, my wife, from whom I had become separated during the stampede from Hampton on the 27th of May, wrote me as follows: "From all I can learn, you will not have the justice done you even of an opportunity of defending yourself. *I think you had better go, and stay away.*" A valued female friend on the same day wrote: "Don't cross Back river. Stay at Old Point until the excitement subsides."

On the 7th of June, I received from Robert Saunders, Esq., an old political and personal friend, and former colleague in the Legislature, a letter of warning, from which the following is an extract:

"WILLIAMSBURG, *June* 7, 1861.

"The suspicions against you arise not so much from your absence in Washington, (although, perhaps, that had something to do with it,) as from the following circumstances and allegation:

"The circumstances are, 1st. That some of the voters in the Poquosin region voted against secession, and gave for it as the reason, that you had told them that the war would result from secession, and that they would be obliged to fight in the ranks, whilst the secessionists, who had been most active in bringing it on, would be officers, &c., &c.; and 2d. That you are living in Hampton, undisturbed when almost all, if not all, the principal citizens have been obliged to go away. The allegation is, that the Government of the United States is *renting* your hotel, at Old Point, from you, to be used as a hospital, instead of *taking* it, as they would do from any citizen whose sympathies are not with the Administration of President Lincoln. I frankly tell you that, until all these things shall be clearly explained and disproved, it will not be safe for you to come above Hampton.

"I am, very faithfully, yours,

"RO. SAUNDERS.

"JOS. SEGAR, ESQ."

And so heeding the admonition I have never since ventured "above Hampton," but have been from that day to this an exile from my native land, save where the Union's star-gemmed banner floats.

On the 24th of May, '61, the Government took possession of my farm adjacent to Fortress Monroe, and still holds it, covered with camps, tents, hospitals, and stables, and desolated almost beyond reparation's reach. The Hygeia Hotel, at the Fortress, of which I owned a moiety, and which had already cost $80 000, had been before seized, and has since been destroyed by order of the Government, without a dime's allowance for damages or rent of either farm or hotel.

Social desolation too has laid its hand heavy upon me. The happiness of the domestic fireside is blasted—the happy home is gone. Son, married daughter, nephews, who were like children to me, son-in-law, and grand-children, I have not laid eye on since the bloody strife began. All these sacrifices I have borne without a murmur.

To refer to these personalities is not pleasant to me, but he who questions my loyalty wounds me in a tender point, and forces me to lift the veil of privacy from my private griefs.

Now, let my opponent come forward and show *his* scars. There are mine. Can he match them? Can he show a bruise even? What service has he rendered the Union cause, or what suffering has he endured, for the $3,000 appointment he carries in his pocket, and which ought to satisfy any reasonable greed?

Then I put it to the Union men of Accomac and Northampton, who is the better Union man, he or I? He who in the early fight deliberated

in "cold debate" whether "to be or not to be;" who held confederate office; who early smelt the blood of Union men; and who in this canvass has shrunk from the approval of indispensable measures of administration policy: or myself, comparatively a veteran in the service, who has held no confederate office, who stood under the old flag from the start; who sustained the vital war measures of the Government, who can point to his wounds in proof of his fealty; and who has stifled no opinion on any question of the crisis?

Can you indeed be serious in giving your support to Dr. Watson as being more loyal than I am? Why, I had learned from the precepts of Washington and the early fathers to love and venerate the Union before he had doffed his swadling clothes, and I have grave doubts whether he has the scope of conception to take in and fully comprehend and appreciate, in all its glorious aspects and magnificent bearings, the mighty question of Union.

That he falls short of such statesmanlike grasp, I have only to refer you to his course in reference to my vote and speech on the Ship Canal bill. That was a measure of all-pervading, almost illimitable nationality, the *most* national enterprise ever suggested since we were a nation. It would have forged more chains to link together in interest and harmony all sections of the country, and generated more ties to render the Union indissoluble, than all the schemes proposed from the foundation of the government to the present hour.

That speech of your late Representative, I humbly submit, is full of the most Catholic Union sentiment, and I am prouder of it, I beg to say, than all the speeches I ever made in a quarter of a century's service in public life. I would not for the honors of a thousand elections to Congress yield up the glory of having made it. No amount of gold and silver would purchase from me the erasure of my humble name from that proud list of ayes which were cast for this incomparable Union-binding, Union-saving measure. I thank God that I had the opportunity of placing my name on so honorable and so honored a record, and if the striking of it from that record would to-morrow secure me the entire vote of the district, I would scorn to receive it on any such condition.

Fellow-citizens, you may not again return me to Congress. But if you do not, I shall not find it in my heart to complain, for by electing me once, you have awarded me the opportunity—which otherwise, had never befallen me—to mount, humble as I am, a few rounds of the ladder which leads up to an honorable distinction and enviable fame. You furnished an humble American the occasion to place himself near the side of the great South Carolinian, Mr. Calhoun, who, in his better day, despising all sectionalism as beneath American statesmanship, soared to etherial regions, and looking down only upon an entire and common country, recommended to his countrymen an imperial system of internal improvements, which, had it been consummated when he commended it, would have so strengthened the bonds of the Union that no human power could have snapped them, and which would have held the Union of our God-like fathers close, compact, and intact—a glorious entirety and magnificent integrity, instead of a disjunct nationality, and the tumbled pillars and scattered fragments of a once matchless fabric. In a word, I voted for the ship canal bill as involving a grand measure of concord, peace, love, and Union. It is the brightest jewel that sparkles for me, whose lustre will be among the chief of my earthly possessions. The polluted breath of an ignoble demagogueism may assay to dim its brightness, but the polished hand of a true statesmanship will, in good time,

But my opponent repudiates the speech and the vote. The pure vein of national, unsectional, Union sentimentality, which runs through them, could not captivate him, and this, too, while professing to be *par excellence* a Union man—a better Union man than myself. He resorts to the usual demagogue expedient of exciting prejudice against me by telling the people that this Ship Canal will cost a great deal of money, and bring western grain in competition with your own; and to effect his aim, he does not scruple inaccurately to represent the great measure, most probably having never read or seen the bill.

He has told you in all his speeches that the work will cost fifty millions. He took good care not to let you know that the estimate of the most skilful engineers make the cost only $16,800,000, and that the bill called for no more, and not for one dollar from the Treasury, and of course for no taxes upon the people. Yet such is the fact.

The engineers estimate the whole cost at about seventeen millions, while only the credit of the United States is loaned to the States of Illinois and New York by an issue of guarantied bonds, redeemable in twenty years, and to be paid off by the income of the improvement, which, it is clearly demonstrated in the Engineers' Reports, will be far more than adequate to liquidate the whole amount of the bonds in far less than the allotted period of redemption.

To make palpable my explanations on this point, I quote the language of Colonel Foster, a distinguished gentleman of the West, and a practical merchant and a statesman. He says, and says most truly:

"So far as related to the Illinois work, the bill proposed the issuing of Government bonds to the amount of about thirteen and one-half millions of dollars, redeemable in twenty years, and bearing six per cent. interest, with the pledge of the tolls for the payment of accruing interest, and the ultimate payment of principal, for which the vast mass of animal and vegetable food, annually flowing through this channel would have afforded an ample guaranty. The issue of the bonds would have subserved all of the purposes of a direct appropriation, and would have commanded the confidence of capitalists at a time when there was never so much redundant capital, seeking investment. So that the objects of this scheme, which encountered such determined opposition, might be summed up in a single paragraph: *The loan of the Government credit, without involving the necessity of raising a dollar by taxation, to construct a work by which the whole system of navigable waters of the United States would have been placed under the protection and control of our gun-boats, and by which our internal commerce, in its flow towards the ocean, would have been relieved of an almost intolerable burden.*"

So there is no taxation for you in this ship canal scheme. It will be a great good to us all—a blessing to the entire nation—and without its costing the people a dollar.

But you are told that, when consummated, it will bring the grain of the West in competition with the grain of the Eastern Shore.

This argument, or rather this worn-out humbug, is as old as demagogism itself. In my various defences of the internal improvement policy, I have riddled it into shreds a thousand times, as De Witt Clinton and Governeur Morris, and Joseph C. Cabell had done long before the task devolved on me. I shall expose it no farther on the present occasion than to say—what is practically known to every farmer on the Eastern Shore—that the vast accumulation of the products of the great West in the city of New York through the Erie Canal, and the net-work of the Northern railroads, so far from working competition with your productions, adds greatly to their value and price. You all know that you go

better prices now than you did before the canal and railroad systems got under way, and that you get better prices to-day in New York for your wheat, corn, oats, and potatoes than you do in any other market in the land.

The philosophy of the thing I need not detail. The fact is so, and you know it; and if the fact be so, you need not perplex your heads about the theory.

Fellow-Union men of the Eastern Shore! I trust you will not recognize the unfounded claim of my opponent to be a better Union man than I am. It is all mistake. And if for no other reason, I beg you send me back to Congress that I may there again give to this grand scheme of nationality and union—what I will assuredly again give it if I shall be there—a cordial support.

JOS. SEGAR.

May 16, 1863.

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